



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

March 19, 2004

PANAMA EXPRESS DRUG KINGPIN EXTRADITED

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez announced today the extradition of JOAQUIN MARIO VALENCIA-TRUJILLO from Colombia to the Middle District of Florida on an Indictment alleging his participation in a Continuing Criminal Enterprise, Conspiracy to Import Cocaine, Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Cocaine and Conspiracy to Engage in Money Laundering. If convicted, Valencia-Trujillo faces a sentence of twenty years' imprisonment to life imprisonment. The defendant arrived in Tampa early this morning and is scheduled to make his first appearance this afternoon in Tampa federal court at 1:00 p.m. before U. S. Magistrate Judge Mary S. Scriven.

The defendant, who is alleged to have operated under various aliases, including 'Oscar Martinez', 'El Joven' and 'El Abogado', was arrested in Bogota, Colombia on January 31, 2003 after meeting with Colombian prosecutors. Following the arrest, the Colombian Government seized various assets of Valencia's valued at \$25 million. Last month, the Colombian Supreme Court approved the extradition request and Colombian President Alvaro Uribe ordered the defendant extradited to the Middle District of Florida.

"The extradition of Joaquin Mario Valencia-Trujillo is another landmark event for

Operation Panama Express,” stated Mr. Perez. “The indictment and extradition of Valencia-Trujillo demonstrates the investigative scope of Panama Express encompasses not only the interdiction of more than 260 tons of cocaine on the high seas by the United States Coast Guard, but tracing the drugs back to the ultimate suppliers and organizers and bringing them to justice in the United States.”

Valencia-Trujillo is alleged to have operated as a key member of the infamous Cali cartel since the early 1990s and is accused of transporting over more than 100 tons of cocaine annually to the United States. As a consequence, Valencia is reported to have amassed a personal fortune estimated as high as \$500 million. In March 2003, the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) designated Joaquin Mario Valencia-Trujillo as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker. This action subjects Valencia-Trujillo and 28 front companies to economic sanctions, including blocking all assets in U.S. jurisdiction and prohibiting Americans from doing business with them.

Drug Enforcement Administrator Karen Tandy also applauded the investigation and this most recent development. “Let there be no mistake,” said Administrator Tandy. “This investigation proves we will hunt down these criminals wherever they hide. And they cannot find shelter behind their stacks of money; not even \$500 million is enough to shield them from justice and the rule of law. I am so proud of the courageous, hard-working law enforcement professionals who made this operation such a stunning success.”

Director Robert S. Mueller III, Federal Bureau of Investigation, commended the investigative efforts put forth by all the participants of the Panama Express initiative that resulted in the extradition of Valencia-Trujillo. Director Mueller noted that successes such as this are made possible only when a coordinated effort is put forth by local, state, and

federal law enforcement agencies. “This is the continuation of the combined effort to bring to justice major international drug traffickers,” stated Mueller.

Participating in Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Operation Panama Express are; The United States Coast Guard (USCG); The Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATFS); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); The Internal Revenue Service (IRS); The U. S. Attorney’s Office; Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Sheriff’s Offices from Pinellas, Hillsborough and Sarasota Counties. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph K. Ruddy of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force for the Middle District of Florida.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty

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